

Family to Family News

Alphabet Soup

Each month we will cover a few acronyms parents might hear while in First Steps. Sometimes it is awkward for families to ask. Do you know these?

- EI = Early Intervention

Services provided to infants and toddlers in the First Steps system.

- IFSP = Individual Family Service Plan

The document used in First Steps that identifies and guides the services each child and family will receive from First Steps providers.

- IEP = Individual Education Plan

The document used in school systems that identifies and guides the services each child will receive at school.

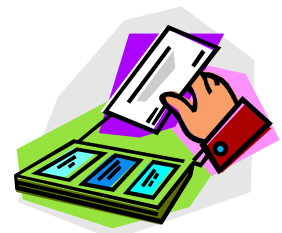
Insurance Billing and Cost Participation

By now, as a First Steps family, you are familiar with the idea of Cost Participation. If you are eligible for cost participation, you have even received your first statements for co-payments owed. As part of the cost participation process, you may have discussed with your Service Coordinator the option to allow First Steps to bill your private insurance.

Many families have expressed questions and concerns with regard to billing insurance. It is important to understand that even if a family gives consent to bill insurance, First Steps may be unable to bill if the insurance company will not enroll First Steps as a provider. If First Steps does bill insurance, there is no guarantee that the insurance company will pay the claim. Claims may be denied, or

claims could be applied to the family's deductible. In all cases, the family is responsible for the cost participation payment if insurance does not pay.

For First Steps, the primary hurdle in getting insurance billing (and collection) off the ground is the willingness of insurance companies to enroll the First Steps system as a provider. While the Indiana Medicaid system has enrolled First Steps as a provider, most insurance companies require each individual service provider to enroll and bill separately. That type of enrollment requirement prevents the Central Reimbursement Office from successfully billing insurance. The bottom line.... First Steps is ready to bill, when insurance companies are ready to make it possible.



There is a movement among a small group of families to introduce legislation during the next Indiana General Assembly to help with this issue. Family to Family will strive to keep families up to date on any new developments in Cost Participation. For current information, check the "What's New" link on the First Steps website at www.in.gov/fssa/first_step. Don't forget to visit the link for Family to Family while you are there!

Name The Newsletter

We hope you enjoy the first monthly issue of the Family to Family newsletter. The newsletter will keep families informed of current issues in First Steps, as well as provide information and resources to help parents better meet the changing needs of their child and family.

We would like to invite you to participate in our "Name the Newsletter" contest. Parents, providers and all stakeholders are welcome to participate. If you would like to submit a name for consideration, email your entry to dlarlandf2f@insightbb.com.

Entries must be received by

November 20. The contest winner will receive a gift from the Family to Family project and recognition in the next newsletter.

Please view the newsletter each month on the First Steps website and send us your suggestions about topics you would like to see covered in



The What's New Icon from the First Steps Website

Best Practices

For the past several years Indiana's First Steps program has increasingly utilized its website to communicate with the system's stakeholders. Families who have access to the internet are encouraged to check the website regularly to keep up with current policies, procedures and practices. All new postings are listed for a period of time under the "What's New" link, so be sure to visit that link each time you log onto the website.

One important document currently posted is the latest version of the Best Practices In Early Intervention document.

The Best Practice document serves as a tool for families and providers to make informed choices and decisions about services a child will receive. Defining Best Practices is important to ensure that infants and children receive developmentally appropriate services geared to the individual needs of the child and family. Best practices are services and supports based on current, evidence-based practice accepted in the field of early intervention.

The first draft of the Best Practices document was posted last summer. Based on the

comments received from stakeholders during the review period, revisions were made to the document. A summary of those revisions and the complete second draft are now available on the website under the "What's New" icon. Comments are being accepted through November 7. If you wish to submit a comment, follow the instructions under "Policy Information" to transmit your comments by e-mail. Your opinions and suggestions do matter!

Free Resources for Families

The following free resources can help families better understand the issues of financing the health care needs of their child:

[Introduction To Managed Care for Children with Special Health Care Needs](#)

This brochure from Family Voices explains how managed care is different than traditional insurance and details things to consider when making decisions about managed care. For a free copy, email dlarlandf2f@insightbb.com.

[Paying The Bills: Tips for Families on Financing Health Care for Children with Special Needs](#)

This booklet includes tips on getting started, making your child's health insurance work for your family, making public programs work for you, tackling medical bills, influencing decision-makers, documenting your child's special needs,

changing decisions, cost savings, finding other sources of funding, and connecting with other families.

One free copy can be ordered from the US Department of Health and Human Services website. Go to www.ask.hrsa.gov, then click on "Search the Information Center". Enter publication number MCHL094. Click on the title and follow the links. Families can also call 1-888-ASK-HRSA.

[Third Edition of the Consumer Guide to Medicaid Waiver Home and Community Based Services, July 2003 Update](#)

This booklet from the Governor's Planning Council for People with Disabilities describes Indiana's Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waivers as well as a variety of other home and community services funded by various programs in Indiana. It explains the application process, consumer rights, the quality assurance process, how to

choose a provider and lists additional resources for information or assistance. You can download the booklet at their website at www.in.gov/gpcpd/ publications, order by email at gpcpd@gpcpd.org, or call toll free 1-866-234-1635.

A good general resource for families is also available:

[Exceptional Parent Pocket Resource Guide 2003](#)

This guide provides 144 pages of information including:

- National Resources for Specific Disabilities
- Alliance for Technology Access Centers
- Federal & Federally Funded Information Resources
- National Information & Advocacy Resources
- Parent Training & Information Centers
- State Assistive Technology Programs
- and more.

The first 100 families to contact Family to Family will receive this guide free. Send an email to superpack1@aol.com.

Advocacy Tip of the Month

"By appreciating others' efforts and nurturing relationships with them, we're improving our ability to help our children get what they need."

*Kathy Snow,
Disability is Natural*